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# Letter dated 1 June 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the fifty-sixth monthly report of the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) (see annex). The report covers the period from 24 April to 23 May 2018.

Arrangements are continuing with regard to the planned destruction of the remaining two chemical weapons production facilities, of the 27 declared in total. The destruction operations themselves will then take a further two to three months, assuming that security conditions permit.

I note that the open issues relating to the declaration and further submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic remain unresolved, notwithstanding the fact that information received by OPCW from the Syrian Arab Republic has partially addressed some of the questions raised. I further note that OPCW is awaiting a response from the Syrian Arab Republic to the letter from the Director General of 10 April 2018. I strongly urge the Syrian Arab Republic to extend its full cooperation to OPCW in resolving these issues, without which the international community cannot be fully confident in the complete elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

With regard to the OPCW fact-finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic and the allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Duma (eastern Ghutah) on 7 April 2018, a team was deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period to visit the relevant sites. In addition, the OPCW Technical Secretariat issued a report of the fact-finding mission on an incident alleged to have taken place in Saraqib on 4 February 2018. In that report, which was transmitted to me and circulated to the Security Council (S/2018/478, enclosure), the fact-finding mission found that chlorine had likely been used as a chemical weapon in the incident.

I express my confidence in the integrity and expertise of the fact-finding mission in carrying out its crucial investigative work. I should also like to express my concern that, yet again, we are confronted with a conclusion of the likely use of chemical weapons.

The use of chemical weapons, by any party to the conflict, is a war crime. It is an act prohibited by international law and has no justification under any circumstances. As such, no use of chemical weapons can be allowed to go unaddressed. I once again call upon members of the Security Council to ensure that an independent, professional and objective mechanism is dedicated to identifying those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**



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## Annex

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled "Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme", prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council (see enclosure). My report covers the period from 24 April to 23 May 2018 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(*Signed*) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

## Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

### Note by the Director General

### Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

#### Background

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.

2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities" (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation "in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1".

3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria" (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015) noting the Director-General's intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria, along with information on the Council's discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled "Report by the Director-General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director-General's intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.

4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled "OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall "regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1".

5. This, the fifty-sixth monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 24 April 2018 to 23 May 2018.

#### Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of Executive Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

6. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) The Secretariat has verified the destruction of 25 of the 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. As previously reported, in November 2017 the Secretariat conducted an initial inspection

of the last two stationary above-ground facilities in accordance with paragraph 44 of Part V of the Verification Annex to the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter "the Convention"). Thanks to the voluntary contributions provided by States Parties to the Syria Trust Fund for the Destruction of Chemical Weapons, including contributions provided in response to the Secretariat's Note S/1541/2017 (dated 9 October 2017), the Secretariat, together with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), has been making all the required arrangements to assist the Syrian Arab Republic in the destruction of the facilities located at these two sites. The remaining required arrangements are expected to be finalised in the coming weeks. Once the arrangements are in place, destruction operations are expected to take two to three months, subject to security conditions.

(b) On 17 May 2018, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its fifty-fourth monthly report (EC-88/P/NAT.3, dated 17 May 2018) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

**Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities**

7. As stated in previous reports, all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have now been destroyed.

**Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decisions EC-81/DEC.4 and EC-83/DEC.5**

8. During the reporting period, the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) continued its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with paragraph 3 of Council decision EC-81/DEC.4 and paragraph 6 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5.

9. As reported previously, in a letter to Deputy Foreign Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic, Dr Faisal Mekdad, dated 10 April 2018, the Director-General referred to his report entitled "Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team" (EC-87/HP/DG.1, dated 2 March 2018) and reiterated that unanswered questions remain that require a response. An updated non-exhaustive list of questions, including follow-up questions arising from the answers provided by the Syrian Arab Republic in a note verbale dated 19 February 2018, was attached to the Director-General's letter.

10. The Director-General also repeated his request to the Syrian authorities to provide all necessary information that would assist in clarifying the remaining issues associated with the declarations and further submissions of the Syrian Arab Republic. Additionally, the Director-General restated that the Secretariat will continue to assist the Syrian Arab Republic in resolving these issues in a manner consistent with the Convention and relevant Council decisions. The Secretariat has not received a response from the Syrian Arab Republic to the Director-General's letter dated 10 April 2018.

**Other activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic**

11. UNOPS continues to provide support to the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement.

12. As at the cut-off date of this report, one OPCW staff member was deployed as part of the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Supplementary resources**

13. As previously reported, the Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the OPCW FFM and other remaining activities, such as those of the DAT. As at the cut-off date of this report, total contributions to this fund stood at EUR 17.1 million. Contribution agreements had been concluded with Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Monaco, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

**Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria**

14. Guided by Council decisions EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 23 November 2015), as well as by United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015), the FFM continued to study all available information relating to the allegations of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

15. During the reporting period, the FFM team continued its deployment to the Syrian Arab Republic with regard to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Douma on 7 April 2018. The team visited relevant sites, collected samples, and conducted interviews.

16. On 15 May, the Secretariat issued a Note entitled, "Report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria Regarding an Alleged Incident in Saraqib, Syrian Arab Republic on 4 February 2018" (S/1626/2018). The report shares the findings by the FFM that chlorine was likely used as a chemical weapon in Saraqib on 4 February 2018.

**Conclusion**

17. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will be on the activities of the FFM and on the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, including declaration-related issues, as well as on the verification of the destruction of the two stationary above-ground facilities, and annual inspections of the underground structures already verified as destroyed.